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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 000997

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DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S CARSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/29/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: SOMALIA - AL-SHABAAB HARASSMENT OF MEDIA OUTLETS

Classified By: Somalia Unit Counselor Robert Patterson for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

Summary

¶11. (C) Elements of al-Shabaab have been involved in the apparent harassment of three separate radio stations in the past month. Two stations, one in Beled Hawa and another in Baidoa, were temporarily closed for airing content disagreeable to al-Shabaab. A Shabelle reporter in Baidoa was reportedly arrested and held for 24 hours, apparently also for reporting deemed by al-Shabaab to be unfavorable. Our contacts speculate that these closures may indicate increasingly desperate attempts by al-Shabaab, reportedly fracturing along clan lines, to maintain relevance and control in Somalia. End summary.

Three Incidents of Harassment

¶12. (C) The month of April saw al-Shabaab involved in the apparent harassment of three Somali radio stations, all reportedly for airing content deemed by al-Shabaab to be objectionable. On April 9, Radio Maandeq in Beled Hawa, immediately across the border from Mandera, Kenya, was closed for three days after airing a report about clashes between two sub-clans over a piece of land. Ahmed Mohamed Aden, Maandeq's director and a close post contact, told us that members of one of the al-Shabaab-affiliated militias in the conflict felt Maandeq had reported on the conflict in a biased manner, so ordered the station closed and demanded to preview all programming. Aden complied with the closure order but did not hand over any programs for review. He said the head of the al-Shabaab group in his district sent a verbal apology three days later, and the station reopened without any change to its content.

¶13. (SBU) On the evening of April 17, al-Shabaab elements in Baidoa arrested Radio Shabelle reporter Mohiddin Hassan Mohamed at his home, after having called to advise him that they were en route. Reports indicate Mohamed was arrested for "false reporting," possibly regarding the locations of al-Shabaab-related roadblocks in the region. Mohamed was released after 24 hours after interventions from Radio Shabelle and stated that he was not mistreated while in custody.

¶14. (C) An al-Shabaab militia forced their way into the premises of Baidoa's Radio Jubba on April 26, shutting down

the station and arresting three journalists. The journalists, who were released on April 28 without having been charged with a crime, told us they were accused of airing news concerning al-Shabaab security operations. New editor Mohamed Adawe, one of the arrested journalists, told us that on April 26 the station had aired live interviews with people who had been arrested during an al-Shabaab security operation but who were later discovered to be innocent herders. Adawe told us the release came after the three journalists agreed with al-Shabaab that Shabelle would not air any programs, including commercials, with musical content. He also told us that the al-Shabaab elements accused the station of contradicting Islamic principle by airing call-in programs during nighttime hours in which women were included. Adawe said the al-Shabaab told him the station had been spared negative action for the musical content and call-in programs until the reports about the security operation.

¶15. (C) In all three of these cases, Somali journalists groups such as the Somali Coalition for the Freedom of Expression (SOCFEX) and National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) issued statements condemning the closures and arrests. Our contacts spoke quite freely about the incidents, and didn't report any physical violence during the incidents.

Comment

¶16. (C) These three similar incidents were especially notable

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in that they occurred within a short period of time and were all perpetrated by al-Shabaab elements in each town. Our contacts tell us they are not entirely surprised to see al-Shabaab acting against activities like music, which al-Shabaab sees as anti-Islam in spite of Somalia's rich history of music, and shows involving women. Some contacts have gone so far as to assert that these actions reflect attempts by al-Shabaab to maintain control and relevance in the areas of Somalia they control, in spite of the groups reported clan-based infighting.

RANNEBERGER